

## **Mayor Bloomberg readies for fight to make elections nonpartisan after failing to do so in 2003**

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New York politicians are preparing to battle Mayor Bloomberg over his desire to make city elections nonpartisan - a fight he lost in 2003 but has never forgotten.

The commission he appointed to recommend changes in the City Charter is considering whether to ask voters in November to allow candidates to run without party labels.

At a raucous meeting at Lehman College in the Bronx last night, legal experts sparred over whether nonpartisan elections would hide candidates' beliefs from voters.

"Party label conveys instant facts about a candidate," said David Jones, head of the Community Service Society. Nonpartisan elections "would discourage voter turnout ... serving to confuse and mislead voters."

Bloomberg believes the existing system locks out independent voters because only registered Democrats can vote in the primary elections that decide most city offices. He spent \$7 million in 2003 to back the change, but the initiative lost, winning just 30% of the vote.

Some commissioners doubted the value of asking voters the same question they so resoundingly rejected in 2003.

Matthew Goldstein, the commission's chairman and the chancellor of CUNY, predicted the panel would do something to address the city's sorry voter turnout.

"What I came away with tonight was a determination to find some things that we might suggest that will ultimately lead to more engagement or more voter registration."